

## MODERN WORDS...NOT!

*Here are a few terms that you might think were recent additions to English, but have actually been in the language for quite some time.*

**POLITICALLY CORRECT:** Dates back to a 1793 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Chisholm v. Georgia*. Justice James Wilson wrote that the people, not the states, held the real power in the country: "To 'The United States' instead of to the 'People of the United States' is the toast given. This is not politically correct."

**SMASH HIT:** The entertainment trade magazine *Variety* began using this accolade to describe a successful movie in the 1920s.

**SPORK:** The term for a spoon/fork has been around since at least 1909, when it appeared as an entry in the *Century Dictionary*. The utensil itself has been in use since the mid-1800s.

**BUNK:** This word for "empty talk" or "nonsense" originated in 1820 when Congressman Felix Walker, who was from Buncombe, North Carolina, talked at length about whether Missouri should be admitted to the Union as a free state or a slave state. Politicians subsequently adopted the phrase "talking from Buncombe." That was shortened to "bunkum" and finally to "bunk" by humorist George Ade, who wrote in his 1900 book *More Fables*, "History is more or less bunk."

**TRUTHINESS:** Popularized by satirist Stephen Colbert in 2005, it's been listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary* since 1824 as an alternate form of "truthfulness." When told that it was already a word, Colbert retorted, "You don't look up 'truthiness' in a book, you look it up in your gut!"

**NOT!:** Loudly proclaiming "Not!" at the end of an assertion to negate that assertion was popularized in the late 1980s in *Saturday Night Live's* "Wayne's World" sketches, but the joke first gained popularity in the early 1900s by, among others, humorist Ellis Parker Butler, who wrote in *Pig is Pigs* (1905), "Cert'nly, me dear friend Flannery. Delighted! Not!"

Today 15% of U.S. workers belong to unions, down from over 40% in the 1950s.